

Almajiri System, Radicalization and Affiliation to Insurgent Groups in Nigeria: A Critical Review

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Abstract

This paper discussed Almajiri phenomenon from empirical and conceptual views, analyzing the system through underpinning its relationship with radicalization as well as possible affiliation with insurgent groups like Boko Haram in Nigeria. It also reviews the existing literature critically, through highlighting their strengths and weaknesses on the basis of explaining Almajiranci as a pathway to radicalization and affiliation to insurgency groups. In essence, the paper traced the drives for radicalization and affiliation to radical group Boko Haram, through structural and ideological approach, as well as the vulnerability of falling easy prey of such affiliation. It therefore emphasizes reliance on relevant empirical studies in raising arguments on relationship between Almajiranci, radicalization and affiliation to insurgent groups, rather than rhetoric assumptions, particularly in theorizing synergy between the system and involvement in any deviant behaviours. It further suggested need for provision of retrievable indices, by responsible agencies, which will avail researchers with data relevant in empirical and conceptual analysis.

Key words: *Almajiri, Radicalization, Vulnerability, Affiliation, Insurgency, Boko Haram.*

Introduction

The recent upsurge of insurgency by militant group *Boko Haram* in Nigeria draws attention of many academic writers in explaining the etiology, trend and pattern of the menace. Some writers (Hansen 2016; Obeta and Sabestien 2015; Akubor, 2016; Goment and Esomchi 2017; Aghedo and Eke 2013), sought to rhetorically analyze the possible linkage between the traditional form of Islamic educational system known as “*Almajiranci*” and affiliation to the insurgent group “*Boko Haram*”, essentially by depicting *Almajiranci* as an easy avenue of recruitment by the insurgent groups. However, most of the literatures fall short of presenting empirical basis upon which their assumptions rely, nor do they highlight contextual explanation which underpins the vivid chord of relationship that exist between the two phenomena. Rather they focus on expressing conditions and drives assumed as inherent in *Almajiranci* like economic deprivation, parental neglect and some adverse experiences that can stimulate offending behaviours, factors which are also common among other vulnerable groups.

Logically, some of the analysts, sought to assume that, the existence of *Almajiranci* as cultural practice in acquiring Qur’anic knowledge, and despising western form of education on one hand, and on the other, the upsurge of *Boko Haram* insurgency as an attempt by marginalized youths who formed the radical group to establish Islamic state, makes them conceptualize the two as related businesses of the same enterprise. The argument remains on the discussion stage, as different views from multiple perspectives demonstrate strength and weakness in theorizing the synergy between *Almajiranci*, process of radicalization and affiliation to insurgent groups. This paper critically scrutinizes the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments presented in establishing the relationship.

However, it should be noted with strong emphasis that, the paper aimed not to dispute the vulnerability of *Almajirai* in becoming trapped into the circumstances that will precipitate them as prone to insurgency affiliation. Rather it seeks to highlight strengths and weaknesses of the rhetoric conceptualizations and empirical researches presented in explaining *Almajiri* system as a pathway to radicalization and affiliation to insurgent groups, like *Boko Haram*, *Maitatsine* and ‘*Yandaba*, such that, the nexus between *Almajiranci* and affiliation to such groups will be figured out explicitly, for better understanding.

Conceptualizing *Almajiri* System

Almajiri, (pl. *Almajirai*) not to be confused with every destitute street child, refers to a pupil who left his parents in search for Qur’anic knowledge and to acquire Islamic values. The system is called “*Almajiranci*” which has origin with advent of Islam. The word rooted from Arabic word “*Almuhajir*” which literally means “emigrant”, connoting that the student comes from far community to study Qur’an and Islamic values (Khalid, 1997). The concept of *Almuhajir* in the world of Islam, started firstly when the Holy Prophet of Islam (PBUH) migrated with his companions from Mecca to Medina. The migrated companions are labeled as “*Muhajirun*” meaning emigrants; they have special value in Islam, for the sacrifice they made by giving up life in their homelands, and joined the prophet who was received by the people of Medina in the year 622 A.D. Hence the adoption of the concept, to explain one’s leaving own homeland for the sake of Allah’s pleasure to study Qur’an and Islamic values (Khalid, 2006).

Abdulqadir (2003) traced the origin of *Almajiri* system in Nigeria in Kanem-Borno Empire around 11th century A.D. Seven centuries after, the system exerted further influence with the establishment of Fulani dynasty under Sokoto Caliphate, essentially by establishing inspectorate of Qur’anic schools under provincial emirs, supported by the state, community members, parents and collected *zakat* and *waqf*, as well as supplementary efforts by the teachers and students through farming. The coming of colonialists dismantled the system, the emirs lost power to the colonial administration, with resulting lack of support from the government. The consequence, as highlighted by Shehu is that:

The colonialists specifically came up with policies aimed at destroying the traditional Qur’anic Schools and replacing them with the western style schools. Some people in protest gave their children in trust to the Qur’anic schools Ulama to go to the village or its outskirt to teach them Qur’an. This is one factor that explains why Qur’anic school teachers travel with young children in search of conducive place to settle and teach these children far away from European schools (Shehu, 2006:12)

The above view explains protesting effort by *Almajiri* schools by despising western education, since the fall of Islamic dynasties in northern Nigeria. In the contemporary study, Hoechner (2013) stresses wide gap uncovered by researchers in explaining why children are still enrolled in *Almajiri* system, despite presence of western form of education in Nigeria, or what *Almajiri* students learn in the process of their study. She conceptualizes *Almajiranci*, as a system of “cultural production of educated persons” which exists in non formal-setting, without fixed

salary for the instructors called “*Mallams*”, but relies largely on support from community members and *Almajiri* students. In the study free days, and other intermittent sessions on study days, *Almajiri* pupils engage in different form of labour and begging to secure livelihoods. The ethnographic work of Hoechner (2013) studied *Almajiranci* from within the response of the actors (*Almajirai*). It however, fails to utilize quantitative approach, which would have offered a great deal in understanding the magnitude of correlation between students’ involvement in *Almajiranci* and imbibing morality and self-reliance through their day to day activities.

Hoechner’s view on relationship between *Almajirai* and their *Mallams* contrasted sharply with many writers who conceptualize the relationship from exploitative viewpoint (Abuh 2015; Akubor 2016; Gomment 2017). According to her, the relationship is sort of spiritual contract between the two; the *Mallams* provides knowledge to the students and in doing so, regards the students as “trust” of God, who rewards his actions (p50). Also, the students’ contribution in sustaining their teacher with income generating activities hold some implications for spiritual uplifting, demonstrating pride and self-esteem to the children. In essence such activities prepare them “to fend for themselves”, a notion which also reveals the economic importance of *Almajiranci* in self-reliance for social maturation. In her words:

Almajirci aims to mould children into socially suitable beings by teaching them respect and self-sufficiency....It seeks to prevent them from ‘becoming spoilt’, by exposing them to a certain degree of hardship, and endeavours to ensure that they acquire spiritual capital by memorizing the Holy Qur’an (Hoechner, 2016:82-83).

This view may have offered subjective view of the subjects studied. The study however, neglects to explore the tendency of learning deviant behaviour by *Almajirai* through interaction, within and outside the environment of *Almajiri* schools, as well as adverse experiences inherent in *Almajirci*, which may induce trauma, and in turn influences violent behaviour in pupils’ later part of life (Perez, 2017). Though, early child trauma is not a conclusive predictor of future terrorist activity (Siegel, 2010).

The *Almajiri* Experience and Pathway to Radicalization

It is through contribution of empirical studies, the presence or otherwise of drivers for radicalization, can be explored in relation to their nature, context and forms in *Almajiranci* as a

system. It is important empirical approach should provide the impetus for scientific assumption, as essential in theorizing social phenomenon, because:

Any explanation, structural as well as cultural, that does not into account empirically demonstrated links between two variables, but assumes the existence of the different links is incorrect. Of course, more abstract theoretical concepts may be substituted for the empirical variables, as long as the theoretical propositions logically imply the connections between the empirical variables (Braithwaite, 1953:50).

As stated before, large body of literature sought to link *Almajiri* system with deviant behaviour, like delinquency and source of recruitment for radical groups. For instance, Sodipo, (2013) describes *Almajirai* as “destitute, with little or no formal education, begging to survive, and often swept into religious clashes (p4)”. Some writers attributed parents’ neglect to *Almajiranci*, who are also exploited by their *Mallams* and other public, an experience which predisposes them to destitution and hardships (Abuh 2015; Gomment 2017). According to them the forms of knowledge acquired in the system do not equip the students with operational skills needed to fit into the bureaucratic system under ‘modern capitalist oriented economy’, which Nigeria operates. This view gains support by Akubor (2016), who also in consideration of the economic situation of the nation sees *Almajirai* as the group that are extremely affected, because of their reliance on begging for survival, a reason which subjects them to destitution. It is under the view of these scholars that manipulation and exploitation by some individuals predispose *Almajirai* to poverty and ignorance, to the extent that, they usually find themselves in a situation “to take their destiny in their own hands”, or venture into terrorism, and others become available tools for politics. In the same vein, Casey (2007) and Shehu (2006) believe that, the *Almajiri* pupils learn delinquents’ lifestyle, during street begging through interaction with delinquents’ subculture, but the scholars did not explain the empirical basis for their opinion, or the conditions under which *Almajirai* learn the delinquents’ subcultures. This is why Hoechner (2013) argues that, “statements about why children become *Almajirai* and what they learn by living as *Almajirai* are often based on normative assumptions rather than empirical investigations (p40)”.

One of the flaws with these views lies in their narrow analysis of regarding poverty as a factor for manipulation of *Almajirai*, and therefore conceive every destitute child as *Almajiri*, which

little consideration to other destitute groups, who might have never been enrolled into *Almajiri* system, as well as other school dropouts, who are equally, or in more serious degree engulfed by economic deprivation, a factor which can also risk such groups to “vulnerability” of being manipulated for political reasons. Especially, as Akubor (2016:22) notes how some destitute families send their children to guise as *Almajirai*, to augment daily means for survival. In this regard, if deprivation is a factor for manipulation, or affiliation to radicalism, then it is erroneous, to narrow it to *Almajiranci* alone. Especially if we consider the ethnographic study of Hoechner (2016), which reports commitment of the older *Almajirai* in how they were involved in petty employment and small trading, a track followed by the younger *Almajiris*, who also becoming involved in different income generating activities like laundry services, learning tailoring, sale of tea, juice, to mention few.

Seemingly, these views are theoretically constructed within the caveat of strain (anomie) theory, which explains how destitution and frustration as products of relative deprivation caused by poverty leads to offending behaviour (Merton 1968). Even Hoechner, (2013) was not adamant to acknowledge the influence of economic deprivation especially among rural dwellers, which coupled with population growth as driving factors for enrolment into *Almajiri* system of education. But still, emphasizes *Almajiranci* as an educational effort of families who suffer economic deprivation, and glimpse uncertainty in western education as route to economic prosperity, they therefore, focus to achieve educational and prestige aspirations on *Almajiranci* where they believed to have prospects of succeeding. Such reasons influence Esomchi and Gomment (2017) to believe that terrorist and other violent groups like “*Yan Daba*’ uses *Almajiri* to ignite violence in Northern Nigeria. They based their argument on the menace of *Maitatsine* disturbance of 1980, which took place in some parts of northern Nigeria. According to them, the major followers of *Maitatsine* were *Almajiris*, who learn deviant behaviours by interaction with delinquents like ‘*yan daba*. They conclude that, “the interaction of *Almajiri* with these groups is a breeding ground for juvenile delinquency among *Almajiri* and future terrorism, (p84)”.

It is true, many writings on *Almajirai* were motivated especially after *Maitatsine* riots, mostly arguing that *Almajiranci* produces extremists ready to commit violent crimes, or radical terrorism. But, it is important to note that, there are contradictions in the report of *Maitatsine* tribunal of enquiry, especially concerning *Maitatsine*’s background, or who actually were his

followers (Usman, 2014). In page 131 of the *report*, as observed by Usman (2014), states that 20 percent of *Maitatsine* followers were from neighbouring West African countries, mostly from Niger Republic (p82). In fact, he notes failure in the official report to provide “details on, at least, the names, place of origin, age, occupation, and parents of over 900 followers of *Maitatsine* arrested (p86)”, which are later released. Then one may wonder how some writers come about discovering the details (that only government can provide) of *Maitatsine* followers as *Almajirai*. It is in line with this, many atrocities committed by ‘*Yan Daba*, or street delinquents, with little or no knowledge, those that do not go to school, and not bothering to attend any, is anyhow attributed to *Almajirai*. In response to such assumptions, Hoechner puts in that:

The existing literature does not contribute to a better understanding of the processes through which children become *Almajirai* and through which they learn certain behaviours and attitudes considered problematic is a particularly severe shortcoming, given the enthusiasm with which speculative narratives are constructed in some media (Hoechner, 2013:17)

In a clearer tone, Hiskett (1987) claims that, most *Maitatsine* insurgents were seasonal economic migrants, not *Almajirai* as claim by many writers. However, sketching the synergy between enshrined doctrines of *Maitatsine* movement and *Almajiri* system will provide rigid evidence of relationship between the two, as such, the possibility of manipulating the former by the latter can be traced in doctrinal or ideological similarity, aim at supporting each other. In this regard, the study by Hoechner (2013:83) considers ‘it difficult to imagine that *boko haram* or *Maitatsine* views hold much appeal for *Almajirai*’, and therefore suggests further research to explore the views of graduated *Almajirai* on it. In a nutshell, this signifies immense need for more empirical input to explore the processes, patterns and conditions under which *Almajirai* become affiliated to delinquent or insurgent groups.

Radicalization Process and Vulnerability for Affiliation to *Boko Haram* Group

A clear and thorough insight of “radicalization process” among Muslims in Northern Nigeria will help immensely in underpinning the “vulnerability” of groups or individuals in falling as easy prey into the trap of affiliation to *Boko Haram*. It is equally pertinent to understand the nature and contextual genesis of the insurgent group, more especially the ideological salience, which serves as impetus for creating vulnerability of becoming affiliated to the group. In this regard,

many studies pose assumptions relevant in theorizing such relationship between ‘vulnerability’ and ‘radicalization process’ (Thurston 2016; Aghedo and Eke, 2013; Onuoha 2014a; Hansen 2016; Abbo et al 2017; Abuh, 2016; Akubor, 2016;). However, as emphasized by Abbo et al (2017) few studies were empirical in conceptualizing the phenomenon of *Almajiranci* and affiliation to insurgency in Nigeria. Even some of the few empirical studies, lack coherence, clear and thorough explanation of circumstances and processes through which *Almajirai* transform into insurgents. It is with clear and ethnographic analysis some scholars believe *Almajiranci* does not create a pathway of affiliation to insurgent groups (Thurston, 2016; Hoechner, 2013). Alexander Thurston’s “Salafism in Nigeria: Islam Preaching and Politics” is quite relevant, for its sagacity in bringing to limelight the empirical plane of understanding the radicalization process, upsurge and development of *Boko Haram* movement, through historical and ideological approach. In his view, affiliation to such insurgent groups is a gradual process that involves radicalization through ideological affiliation. Beutel (2009) argues that, many theories attempt to explain why Muslims become radicalized, but no single theory is sufficient to provide adequate explanation on why radicalization occurs. He therefore, comes up with model of hybrid theory of radicalism, which anchors different theories within a unified model, grounded using latest empirical researches and review of existing literatures, to explain why Muslims become affiliated to radical groups.

Neumann and Rogers (2008) conceive radicalization as the social and psychological process of increasing commitment to extreme political or religious ideology. The definition emphasizes social and psychological factors as the processes of radicalization, which usually starts during adolescent age as a pathway to ‘resolve personal negotiations of identity’ (Bhui et al, 2012). In some situation, relative deprivation caused by social exclusion instigates driving force for radicalization. For instance, in Nigeria, Abbo et al (2017) highlight the exclusion of youth including *Almajiri* cohorts in political and economic process creates feelings of strain, which propels affiliation to *Boko Haram*, especially, as the youths see government lead by educated elites (*‘Yan Boko*) as the cause of their predicament. In the same vein, Bhui et al (2012) puts in that; affiliation to insurgent groups is a response to participate actively in overthrowing existing political system for prevailing injustice and marginalization of some groups. This can be sketched in *Boko Haram*’s advocacy for “rejection of western-style; denounce secular

government and advocating for exclusive Islamic framework as they understand it, a thought similar to global jihadists” (Thurston 2012:194). In a systematic explanation, Wiktorowicz (2004:14) identifies thread of four stages as radicalization processes, which are both social and psychological in nature, and in a way related to responses to condition characterized by relative deprivation, they include;

- 1) cognitive opening - an individual becomes receptive to the possibility of new ideas and worldviews; 2) religious seeking - the individual seeks meaning through a religious idiom; 3) frame alignment - the public representation proffered by the radical group “makes sense” to the seeker and attracts his or her initial interest; 4) socialization - the individual experiences religious lessons and activities that facilitate indoctrination, identity-construction, and value changes.

Regarding these stages, Beutel (2007) explains that social exclusion, discontent and problem of self-identity have influence on the cognitive opening. The first three processes are psychological and pre-radicalization stages, that are necessary to the formation of the fourth, which is social in nature. In short, if an individual is not open to new ideas, does not encounter the movement message, or rejects the movement message after initial exposure, he or she will not participate in the kinds of movement activities necessary to fully disseminate the ideology and convince an individual to join. In line with this, Bhui et al (2012) document learning process as essential pathway in affiliation to radical groups like *Boko Haram*;

A geneology of radical Islam and some Salafi teachings justify violence against apostates, supporters of apostates and all who do not adhere to more extreme interpretations of religious faith. This, in turn, suggests that the process of radicalization and recruitment to terrorist roles occurs in a context of religious education and indoctrination (Bhui et al, 2012:3).

This view explains the influence of religious education in inculcating certain radicalizing elements, usually through preaching and other educating forces including internet, utilized by radical groups in spreading their ideas, especially when the psychological and social factors are present. Thus, *Boko Haram* is not exceptional; it has root in line with the advent of *Salafism* in Nigeria;

Moreover, as seen with *Boko Haram*'s eventual affiliation to the Islamic State, the group has a particular *Salafi* genealogy that ultimately proved more amenable to the Islamic State's brand than to *al-Qa'ida*'.....In any case, the movement was part of a broader *Salafi* network in northern Nigeria (Thurston, 2016:198).

It can be understood from the analysis of Thurston (2016) that, the leader of *Boko Haram*, Mohammed Yusuf never attended University of Medina like other reformist *Salafists*, but rose within the protégé of Medina graduates like Jafar Adam, until, when they broke and denounced each other. The doctrine of the *Boko Haram* group is explained explicitly in a manifesto written by Yusuf himself, in response to his critics among the *Salafi* clerics. It is clear also that, Yusuf's ideological connection is highly influenced by *Salafi* jihadists such as "al-Maqdisi and al-'UtabyI (p212)", as he was adherent of their politico-religious ideas. At this juncture it is pertinent to consider the assumption of Bhui et al (2012) that, radicalization process occurs in religious learning and indoctrination, encapsulated in broader *Salafi* ideology, especially if the transitions through stages occur, as documented by Wiktorowicz (2004). This further highlights the influence of both psychological and social factors, at pre-radicalization stage, which is enormously relevant in understanding radicalization process in Nigeria. The assumption is supported by Beutel (2007) who stresses that, the ideology is learned through interaction with others who hold similar view, and its development is essentially reinforced by information technology through internet services. This view may offer guidance on understanding the pathway of how *Almajiri* can become affiliated to insurgent groups through interaction.

A study by Center for Law Enforcement Education in Nigeria (CLEEN) Foundation, under the lead of Dr. Freedom C. Onuoha attempts to explore the synergy between "youths, radicalization and affiliation with insurgent groups in northern Nigeria". The study reveals the vulnerability of *Almajirai* among other groups that were manipulated by *Boko Haram* group, as a result of growing number of children without adequate parental guidance as one of the conditional factors that have contributed to radicalization of youth and religious extremism in Northern Nigeria. This view, like the previous discussed in the last section, offered much in conceiving *Almajirai* in the category of neglected children, and are therefore seen as vulnerable to manipulation by radical groups, which as viewed by Aghedo and Eke (2013:117) such "vulnerability arising from

this destitution makes the *Almajirai* easy prey to conflict entrepreneurs, religious bigots and *Boko Haram* insurgents”.

One of the weaknesses in the methodology used by Onuoha (2014a) study is their reliance on public perception as their basis for analysis, obtained from selected local governments in the states under study. Essentially, the study neglects real actors (members of *Boko Haram*), and search for responses from general public, with the objective of providing “an empirical understanding and assessment of the push and pull factors between youth, radicalization and affiliation with insurgent groups in the northern part of Nigeria (p15)”. No doubt this can be errand in providing adequate details in explaining the research objectives. Especially, as organization like CLEEN can gain access to reach the *Boko Haram* actors under captivity with the government, to obtain relevant data for research purposes.

Hansen (2016) who also views “*Almajirai* and the dispossessed as a source of recruitment for *Boko Haram* and other religious, political and criminal groups in Northern Nigeria” criticizes inclusion of Sokoto and Kaduna states as parts of the Onuoha (2014a) study areas, because according to him, *Boko Haram* is apparently absence there, he also emphasizes that, recruiting alienated young men requires a social-cultural presence at the grass roots level and *Boko Haram*’s catchment area is almost completely confined to the Kanuri-speaking areas. In this regard Hansen constructs *Boko Haram* as ecologically related business, and conceives *Almajirai* as the source for their recruitment. His reason is conceptually based on economic deprivation suffered by the *Almajirai*, but he fails to provide conditional and contextual explanation specifically on the linkages between economic deprivation and *Almajiris* affiliation to *Boko Haram* in the north eastern states, which will help in theorizing ecological factors for radicalisation.

A study by Abbo et al (2017) sought to fill the gap by studying radicalization of *Almajiri* cohorts in the north-eastern states. According to the study, the long existence of established resistance against western values in northern Nigeria, coupled with economic deprivation and social exclusion of *Almajirai* make them cheap resources for radicalisation, by the advocates of *jihadization* ideology through verbal persuasion; in their words:

The promoters of the insurgence ideology also resort to verbal persuasion and vicarious means to indoctrinate the *Almajiri* cohort by revering martyrdom and idolizing other extremist such as Ben Laden, Ayman al Zawahiri, Abu Mus'ab al Zaraqawi who are tagged as heroes, which therefore, boost their sense of self-efficacy in adopting the extremist way of political struggle (Abbo et al, 2017:198).

This assertion highlights the influence of preaching as an instrument for radicalization. Despite utilizing multiple theories to justify their assumptions, the study however, falls short of providing details, as its point of departure, which will explicitly indicate the differences between *Almajirai* and other citizens, regarding vulnerability for radicalization. In essence all the driving factors, the study claimed to have discovered as radicalizing factors for *Almajirai* are common drives that can risk *Non-Almajiri* individuals. Such contradiction can be detected in many views, especially by considering the nature of groups that constitute the membership of the movement.

Boko Haram draws its members mainly from disaffected youth, unemployed high school and university graduates, and destitute children, mostly from but not limited to northern Nigeria. Its membership also includes some wealthy, educated, and influential people (Onuoha, 2014:3b)

In the above statement *Almajirai* are represented as destitute children. They are destitute because they rely on alms to survive (Akubor, 2016), and therefore manifest serious form of economic deprivation (Hansen, 2016; Abboh et al, 2017). This suggests their vulnerability in becoming trapped as recruits of *Boko Haram*. The view by Onuoha (2014b) fails to anchor the learning process of radicalization as pre-requisite of joining insurgent group. Yet, further research is needed especially from graduated *Almajiri* or *Boko Haram* members under captivity, who had *Almajiranci* experiences, to explore the magnitude and circumstance under which economic deprivation can influence *Almajirai* to become terrorists. This is because contrasting views conceive *Almajiranci* as cultural way of instilling contentment and moral behaviour (Hoechner, 2016; Umar, 2003), and that of Thurston (2016), which indicates influence of ideological transmission in inculcating radicalization, rather than economic deprivation or cultural resistance.

According to Onuoha (2014a) the drives that stimulate and instil radicalisation among youth in northern Nigeria, include; Ignorance of the true religious teaching, unemployment and poverty, children with poor upbringing, and high level of illiteracy. The work suffers criticism for not providing operational definition of the concept “true religious teaching” in Islam and how it can be determined (Hansen, 2016). Besides, it also portrays some level of logical inconsistency by presenting opposing variables, in explaining relationship. How can ‘poverty and illiteracy’ as drives, risked educated, employed and wealthy individuals to join the group, or to coerce students of “tertiary institutions in Borno and Yobe states, who constituted the sect’s members, withdrew from school, tore up their certificates and joined the group? (p20)”. This clearly represents contradiction, which requires involvement of the real actors of such group or their doctrinal manifestos in analysis, otherwise, research findings on public perception of their activities are no more than mere opinions of “spectators” rather than the empirical reality of the “actors”.

So far, it can be deduce that, no single theory can sufficiently claim overall discovery of why individuals join *Boko Haram*, as insurgency group, but as Beutel (2009) noted, some theories developed from socioeconomic deprivation, identity politics, social affiliations, political marginalization/grievances and presence of radical ideology are quite relevant in explaining causes of radicalization among Muslims. Still, it is the assumption of this article that, studying relationship between *Almajiranci* as a pathway to radicalization and affiliation to insurgent groups like *Boko Haram* requires more empirical input, involving actors in both parties (*Boko Haram* members and graduated *Almajirai*) as subjects of the study, to focus in explaining condition and processes under which *Almajirai* can become radicalized or affiliated to insurgent groups, rather than relying on conceptual analysis or public opinion to explain the relationship between the two concepts.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is so far clear, *Almajiranci* is an educational system aimed at imparting Qur’anic knowledge and Islamic values, which prestigiously flourished in Kanem-Bornu and Sokoto Caliphate of pre-colonial northern Nigeria. The system is still utilized, especially by some families who suffer economic deprivation, while also perceiving western education as uneasy and uncertain way to moral acquisition and economic prosperity, and therefore, resort to achieve their aspirations

through *Almajiranci*. The system has been subordinated since colonial system, leading to its bastardization and stigmatization as menace causing violence and delinquency in the modern day Nigeria. The efforts of many academic writings has laid assumptions mostly based in explaining how certain conditions in *Almajiranci* like economic deprivation, child begging and lacking certain skills needed in formal setting, create adverse experiences, which influences their affiliation to insurgent groups, as a response to the precarious situation they found themselves, by putting blame on modern socioeconomic and political system.

The critical review offers much for understanding lack of, or weak systematic evidences, as proficient in establishing relationship between *Almajiranci* and affiliation to insurgent groups in Nigeria, because, most of the conceptual literatures presented rhetoric assumptions that needed to be justified through empirical researches. Some of the empirical researches that attempted to do so also adopted weak methodology, by neglecting to involve real actors of insurgency, like militants of *Boko Haram* group as their subjects of study, instead they sought responses of opinions from public, religious leaders, community leaders and so on. The few studies (e.g. Abbo et al, 2017), which considered *Almajirai* as their subjects, also failed to provide adequate explanation on condition, circumstances and processes under which *Almajirai* become affiliated to insurgent groups.

In essence, the write up highlights need for understanding risk factors, processes and ideological factors for affiliation to such radicalized groups. This is because; literatures have indicated convincing evidences that, radicalization and affiliation to insurgent groups is a gradual process, through interrelated stages, which involve ideological indoctrination by dissemination of information as the prime catalyst. It is therefore clear that, a single or few factors cannot cause radicalization and affiliation to insurgent groups in Nigeria, but it is rather, conglomeration of multiple social and psychological factors, each factor involves many factors, which include dissemination and spread of *Jihadi-Salafists'* ideology through many educational forces, relative deprivation, poor governance, to mention few. In this regard *Almajirai* cannot be sole out as one of the vulnerable groups that can be source of recruitments for the insurgent groups, which can be verified further, by involving the real actors (members of *Boko Haram* group) in researches which will underpin how *Almajiranci* can be one of the predisposing factor for learning jihadists' ideology, or if the magnitude of economic deprivation among *Almajirai* can induce affiliation to

insurgent groups. However, this article attempts not to rule out the ‘vulnerability’ of *Almajirai* in such affiliation. But aims to emphasize, the needs for more empirical works to establish such relationship, and/or explore the processes, patterns and conditions under which *Almajirai* become insurgents, which in essence poses serious need for the governmental agencies to provide a database for retrievable information of *Boko Haram* members, which will avail researchers with relevant data for empirical and conceptual analysis.

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